

THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM: AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN ANARCHISM

Wayne John Sturgeon

I find myself in complete rupture with my epoch.

I sing freedom, which my epoch hates.

*I do not love government and am religio-anarchist tendency, while
the epoch deifies government.*

*I am an extreme personalist, while the epoch is collectivist and
rejects the dignity and worth of personality.*

*I do not love war and the military while the epoch lives in the
pathos of war, I love the philosophic mind while the epoch is
indifferent to it.*

*I value aristocratic culture while the epoch degrades it, and
finally, I profess eschatological Christianity while the epoch
recognises only traditional-contemporary Christianity.*

Nicholas Berdyaev

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Introduction: Demythologisation of the word 'anarchy'

What do we mean by the word 'anarchy'? Most dictionaries define it to mean lawlessness, chaos, disorder, confusion. Politicians and the media use the word in this negative sense; thus, it is a word that needs much demythologising, so as to distinguish it from this semantic subversion of meaning.

The word in Greek simply means 'without a ruler, or leader'. In Latin during the Middle Ages, the word was used to describe God as being without a beginning. In the New Testament, 'arky' is usually interpreted as 'beginning'. Milton used it in this respect, and the early Christians believed Jesus to be 'the beginning', 'the Arky of God' (1) who holds primacy and sovereignty over all the powers that be.

The prefix 'an' is the equivalent of the word 'un', meaning 'not' - it does not then have to mean 'anti' or 'against', but speaks of that which is more 'not' something than 'opposed to' or 'against'.

It would be misleading nevertheless to offer a neat definition of anarchism, since most anarchist theory is in essence anti-dogmatic and anti-ideological, offering no manifesto, no party line, no economic blueprint and no pre-packaged description of how a new society would operate. Unlike the definitive and authoritarian manner of statist socialism or Marxist communism,

anarchy rather proclaims that 'where there is no vision, the people perish' (*Prov 29:18*). They therefore must build and incarnate their own vision to become themselves 'ends in the means' of a world free from the centralised state, political violence and all economic domination and exploitation. (*Micah 4, 3-4, Isaiah 2, 4-5 and 11-1-9*).

The Idolatry of Ideology

The State is not something which can be destroyed by being overthrown. It is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour. It can only be subverted by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.

Gustav Landaver

While most of anarchist theory is very diverse and elastic, and there have been many currents and trends within anarchism, its understanding of a free society always includes certain assumptions, ideas and themes: the realisation of a decentralised and self-regulating society, consisting of topless federations and voluntary associations of mutualism between peoples of whatever age, sex, colour, class or creed.

At first sight, although many of the classic anarchist thinkers have been atheist, or at least agnostic, historically the initial source of inspiration was spiritual, coming from the medieval revolutions which were millennialist and apocalyptic. It

was a later historical source, the enlightenment, with its cry of 'no gods, no masters' and its rationalism and utopian romanticism concerning the inevitability of progress and the perfectibility of man, that rejected the initial spiritual source of inspiration.

Consequently, for secular humanist anarchists, the solution is autonomy of the self being a law unto itself. However, Christianity would contend that such autonomy (2), as far as a relationship with a personal creator goes, is ultimately nothing more than a false freedom, bearing resemblance to the biblical account of the fall, where through a misuse of free will humanity is portrayed as being in a state of self-imposed alienation from the Creator. It is this sin that has caused separation in the relationship between humanity and God, which has then fallen upon all dimensions of life - the political, the social, the economic and not least, the environmental.

Such 'anarchy' merely replaces the tyranny of somebody with the tyranny of nobody. With this in mind, a radical, theistic (3) anarchism has as its starting point not a social, economic or political theory, but rather the desire to understand the nature of humanity. Without the link to any particular creed or sect, its adherents reject all denominationalism, witnessing instead to the all-inclusive universal action of the Holy Spirit, rather than any exclusivist right-wing fundamentalism that may think it has a monopoly of the grace of God. We should never identify the truth with ourselves, but like John the Baptist, simply point to Jesus.

Reconstructing Christian Origins: Roots and Forerunners of Christian Anarchism

Anarchism is neither necessarily anti-religious nor anti-Christian, and a Christian anarchism is not an attempt to form a synthesis of two contradictory and opposed systems, but rather an attempt to live the way of the Gospels.

Many individuals and groups throughout history have attempted to do this; such as elements of the early monastic movement, which grew up as a prophetic witness against the popular religion of the domesticating state-church alliance. It was not until Constantine in the fourth century that the Roman state became Christendom, and absorbed the way of Christ into a legitimisation of the powers that be.

This was to further evolve and then split into the institution of the Papacy in the west, and the Orthodox Church in the east. The western church would then further split in the sixteenth century, during the Protestant reformation. We observe during these centuries Christianity being co-opted by the dominant ideology of state power. This was coupled with the 'just war' theory and a progressive sacramentalism and clericalism, together with judicial, penal and legalistic theories of original sin (4), the atonement, free will and predestination, and the judgement to come. The theodicy of the early Church Father Saint Irenaeus inspired a theological view of creation, the fall and redemption, more libertarian and at odds with the later rationalisations of

Augustine (which in due time became the standard orthodoxy of the western church).

Unknown to many within the institutionalised churches there had existed a third way, neither east nor west, Protestant nor Catholic. The Pope being the first Protestant, and all Protestants being crypto-papists, the reformation merely replaced the infallibility of the Pope with the infallibility of the Bible - the paper Pope of Protestantism. Given this premise, God's 'underground' has always been bitterly persecuted and branded as heretical by the established churches, assembling under various names and in different ways: from elements of the early monastic movement to the heterodox Brethren of the Free Spirit (5) and medieval mystics such as Margaret Poretti and Joachim of Fiore to the various Anabaptist groups, 'spirituals' and radicals of the seventeenth century English Civil War, including the Diggers, ranters, Levellers, fifth day monarchists and the early Quakers (6).

Further on, we find the visionary poet, artist and mystic William Blake inspired by this tradition, with his concept of 'Albion' (7); the Russian writers Leo Tolstoy, Nicholas Berdyaev and Fyodor Dostoevsky's legend of the Grand Inquisitor (8); the Spanish Civil War veteran and philosopher Simone Weil; within the Calvinist tradition, the writings of Jacques Ellul (9) and Karl Barth (10); within the Lutheran tradition, the religion-less Christianity of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the existentialism of Soren Kierkegaard; and the Catholic Worker movement inspired by individuals such as Peter Maurin, Dorothy Day and Ammon Hennacy

(with its 'houses of hospitality' and its personalist philosophy), the Protestant version of this being the Sojourners, inspired by the prophetic activism of Jim Wallis. See also Process theology, Liberation theology and Situation ethics. Also worth mentioning is the contemporary 'Creation-Centred Spirituality' movement, the anti-militarist 'Swords into Ploughshares', Gandhi's 'Satyagraha' movement, the novels of Nikos Kazantzakis, the Jewish existentialist Martin Buber and the early kibbutz movement, the Blakeian anarchist Anthony Roberts, the Mennonite tradition as expounded by theologians like J. Denny Weaver (non-violent atonement), John Howard Yoder (politics of Jesus), Walter Winke (*Powers* trilogy), the eschatology of Jurgen Moltmann, and the contemporary Christian activism of Dave Andrews etc.

Speaking Truth to Power

A Christian anarchist does not depend on bullets or ballots to achieve his ideal, and doesn't need a cop or a priest to tell him how to behave. He achieves his ideal by living daily the one-man revolution with which he faces a decadent, confused and dying world.

Ammon Hennacy

The early Christians were known as 'people of the Way' (11), believing Jesus to be the physical incarnation of God's shalom. This is the Hebrew word for peace and justice: a peace far more

cosmic in its scope than merely being the absence of conflict. The Way would not recognise any other absolute primacy, something for which the early Christians were violently persecuted. In refusing to comply with the cult of the Roman emperor, the Way were seen as being subversive of both the political and religious establishment. For them, shalom had already come in embryonic form in the person of the Son of Man. The Kingdom of God already existed within the fallen society, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit was to make it more universally manifest to live by the spirit of Christ and not by the spirit of the fallen world. The ministry of Jesus does not represent a political other-worldly spiritualism, unlike the extremes today within both the political and religious culture of either collectivist mass conformity or extreme individualism. His message was one of the people realising their communal individuality (or an 'equality in hierarchy').

Jesus lived, taught and incarnated this one-man revolution and showed what it is to be fully and authentically human, loving and free. Because of this, he was crucified by a political and religious establishment who saw him both as a political subversive and a religious blasphemer. The need today is for a biblically based liberation theology in the spirit of early Quakerism, which was a true prophetic synthesis of social and personal evangelisation, changing and challenging both individuals and social structures: a realised eschatology. As early Friends would say: "Speak truth to power." The modern day concept of non-violent direct action can be seen as a secularisation of the Quaker concept of bearing witness.

In the Old Testament Book of Samuel we read that the people of Israel demanded a king so that they may be like the other nations:

1 Samuel 8.2

...That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

They did so, even though the prophet Samuel warned them of the consequences of this:

1 Samuel 8.12-15

This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

God told the prophet Samuel to heed the voice of the people in all that they said, for they had not rejected the prophet, but God himself!

Many modern day Christians should heed this when reading St. Paul's famous words in Romans, Chapter 13 verses 1-7 which should be understood in the context of the time and the biblical laws of captivity. (Please refer to Deuteronomy Chapter 28, particularly verse 48):

Romans 13.1-7

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also:

for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Israel was told to keep God's covenant or they would come under the 'Iron Yoke' of exile to a foreign nation. In the Book of Judges, chapter 3.58, we are introduced to the concept of the 'Wooden Yoke' where instead of exile to a foreign nation, Israel would instead be punished by spending time in servitude to another nation although they would be allowed to remain in the land. When Israel went into captivity in Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah told them not to rebel but to faithfully endure God's punishment for their national sin. The captivity lasted seventy years and then Israel was restored to the land, only later to be put under the 'Wooden Yoke' of Roman imperial rule and colonisation. Thus Israel was under God's judgement according to the laws of captivity (further usual references being Jeremiah chapter 27, verses 2,5-7, 11 and chapter 28, verses 10, 12-14) and again like in the pre-Babylonian captivity rather than submit to the 'Wooden Yoke' and remain in the land, they rebelled and came under God's wrath and thus incurred the penalty of the 'Iron Yoke' by being sent into captivity amongst all nations, which is exactly what happened in the very generation that saw Jesus. God used the Roman army to destroy the temple in 70 A.D. and with the destruction of the temple, animal sacrifice was ended forever as Jesus was now the

perfect, once and for all sacrifice for sin which the "Jews" had rejected.

Also, when Jesus was told to "render unto Caesar what was Caesar's" (Matthew 22, 15-22) it is important to stress that the coin bore the 'image' of the emperor but human beings bear the 'image' of God. Therefore, Caesar can have the lifeless image of a coin or piece of money but only God can have the right to worship and glory demanded of the 'life' of a human being bearing his own divine image! Likewise, in the parable of the talents (Please refer to *Luke 16, 1-13, Matt 25, 14-30*) of which most Christians would assume condones usury, capitalism and speculative finance, a deeper reading would suggest otherwise. The 'Lord' in the parable is not Christ but the 'master', i.e. 'the certain man who was rich' is identical to 'another rich man' (*Luke 16, 19*) who is the central character of the parable of 'the rich man and Lazarus' (*Luke 16, 19-31*). It is important to stress that Jesus used a composite parable with several individual but related stories in it (the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the sheep and the goats, the wedding feast etc.) to illustrate the state of the Israel nation in that era and as a polemic against the Pharisees etc. The 'servant' in the parable of the talents merely reflected the righteous character of the master who commended his servitor's cunning in guarding his own interests, the unjust steward mirrored the rich man as the Pharisees reflected the nation. Luke 16.9 is rhetorical and the emphatic "I say to you..." shows that there is a contrast between the lord of the unjust steward and Christ. Faithfulness not shrewdness is the requisite for honours in the

kingdom, the scribes and Pharisees were stewards of Israel's wealth but were wasting it, being lovers of money rather than of God and were merely serving their own greed and interest for personal gain, hence the 'direct action' of Jesus in the temple of the money lenders! (Mark 11, 15-19)

Biblical Economics

In biblical theory, the basic economic unit is the extended family; the family being considered of higher intrinsic authority than the external state in many matters and the basic building block of any humane society. Today, free market economics tend to undermine the 'traditional' ideal of the family with people being better off staying single than in a marriage with family commitments etc. Whether dole slave or wage slave, families at the poorer end of society can find themselves in the poverty trap of not being able to afford to work because of the loss of much needed benefits, thus causing more dependency on the welfare state.

The bible vision of society is that the family should be the basic economic/enterprising unit. Government should be 'minimalist' and highly devolved and decentralised; it is tragic in this context that St. Paul's words in the book of Romans, chapter 13, verse 1-7 have been so taken out of context (see preceding verses, chapter 12, verses 17-21, and chapter 13, verses 8-10, for another understanding of the context Paul is speaking about) and used to justify an authoritarian understanding of

government with the idea, usually exploited by governments all over the world and by so-called church leaders, that Christians should give unconditional submission to government authority, whether religious or secular. In fact, as shown, this is a misinterpretation of what Paul is saying and should be understood in its historical context and also in the light of other scriptures such as Acts of the Apostles, chapter 5, verse 29 where St. Peter says that Christians "ought to obey God rather than Men" when government, the state or indeed 'religious' authorities decree something against the Christian gospel.

Therefore, 'submission' to authority is conditional and relative, not unconditional and absolute (which serves only to clarify the state into 'the beast' of Revelation, chapter 13. In this sense, the American battle cry for independence from the British crown, "rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God", makes good scriptural sense! Christians can therefore be 'conscientious objectors' against an 'unjust war' if drafted, and can refuse to pay taxes in certain situations (while at the same time bearing the consequences) and can also participate in just revolutions in specific circumstances, i.e. the American War of Independence, the English Civil War against a papist tyranny, etc. Bearing in mind though, that while non-violence may be a destination to be reached, not necessarily a path to be trod, the Christian should seek to be neither 'victim nor executioner', that while war may not always be the ultimate evil and peace not always the ultimate good, one should have the right to bear arms (as in the American constitution) in keeping with the biblical and libertarian ethos

of the despecialisation and decentralisation of the military. As Gandhi once said, "better to fight than be a coward" and "patriotism is the true path to happiness"! A true Christian understanding of national defence would, ideally, amount to a concept of 'armed neutrality'.

Jubilee

The basic biblical teaching on economics is found in the Old Testament scriptures such as Leviticus, chapter 25, verses 8-38. This condemns 'usury', the lending of money with interest, verses 35-38, and that land - the most basic natural resource for all economic activity, "is not to be sold permanently", verse 23, and that income 'tax' is replaced by the concept of the 'tithe', a free will offering (see Deuteronomy, chapter 16, verse 10) the percentage being only ten percent (much lower than today's high levels of taxation, both direct and indirect) to pay for the provision of the aged, sick, widowed and orphaned etc. (see Deuteronomy, chapter 10, verses 17-18, 24, 17 and Exodus, chapter 22, verses 22-27). Please note that the ten percent tithe comes out of one's profit or excess, not one's basic income!

Also, according to the law of Jubilee, every seven years *all debts* would be released, a concept similar to the anarchist Proudhon in trying to envisage a system of economics that allows for credit but without the burden of interest. We see here several biblical concepts in relation to issues of national freedom, social justice and environment, economics, conservation etc.,

basically that there should firstly be no landed monopoly (see Isaiah chapter 5, verse 8-9 and Micah, chapter 2, verse 1-2) and that every seven years no-one should work at all, providing the land with much needed rest. Interestingly, if modern farmers would follow this law today, no artificial restoratives would be needed beyond the return of nature's own products, manure etc., and animals would not be victims of intensified factory farming methods etc. Also, money would be simply a means of exchange rather than a commodity in itself, which in one stroke of divine legislation would undermine the entire edifice of global banking and the liberal internationalist capitalist free market! (Where are the conservative fundamentalists now!?) Instead, we have a system based in the bondage of debt (akin to what is said in the Old Testament book of Nehemiah, 5.1 - 13 and Prov, 2.8, 8.9, Psalm 15, 1-5 and Ezekiel 18.5.9), which is ultimately leading to collapse. See the book of Revelation, chapter 18, 1-24, being based historically in the Babylonian system. Real 'wealth' is essentially to be considered akin to the doctrine of economic 'producerism', i.e. people, skills and materials, not numbers on a computer screen.

Biblical economics has many similarities to the economic theories of 'mutualism' (of P.J. Proudhon), 'distributionism' (of G.K. Chesterton), 'social credit' (of C.H. Douglas), 'guild socialism' (of William Morris) and the 'national syndicalism' of Francisco Rola Preto. Also, the basic socialist creed of "from each according to their ability to each according to their need" has biblical precedent (see acts 4.32 and 2.44-45).

The Apotheosis of Anarchy

I am absolutely certain that there is a God in the sense that I am absolutely certain that my love is not illusory. I am absolutely certain that there is not a God in the sense that I am absolutely certain that there is nothing real which bears a resemblance to that which I am able to conceive when I pronounce that name, since I am unable to conceive God, but that thing which I am unable to conceive is not an illusion. This impossibility is more immediately present to me than is the feeling of my own personal existence.

Simone Weil

Christian anarchy is never an end in itself, but simply a way of making room for the person of the Holy Spirit to lead. Christian anarchists would not even necessarily argue that such an enlightened anarchy is a realisable option for secular society now; political authority may be a necessity of social life in a fallen world (but nothing more than a temporal necessity). When the state attempts to take the place of God, Christians must obey God rather than man; but it is no part of Christian anarchy to want to attack, subvert or overthrow worldly power, for to enter the struggle for power would be the first step in becoming like the evil one opposes. Can Satan cast out Satan? The Way is not

about seizing power, but rather to live now (12) according to the Gospels, within the shell of the Babylonian world order.

A Christian anarchy therefore derives from the eschatological (13) orientation of the Gospel, change not being dependent on violent revolution or human goodwill alone to create an unrealistic, idealistic, man-centred utopia, but on the resurrective power of the Holy Spirit.

The Kingdom of God according to the scriptural definition cannot be considered a utopia, since it is in no way a projection of man's self-willed ability to create an order or impose an order on things. It is not concerned with humanity's self-enlightened self-interest, but with the vindication of God's eternal purpose.

In this context therefore, the Second Coming of Christ is interpreted in a revolutionary and liberating way. There is no particular class, church or organisation that will act as a vanguard of change in the historical process, since all social, religious and political relationships in a fallen society share in the same spiritual condition. Whether we be master or slave, ruler or ruled, we are all sinners in need of grace.

The Second Coming is not just an event to be anticipated in the future, but now. It is a realised eschatology, and it is only because of this eschatological orientation of the Christian faith that we can afford to be anarchist in respect to this world's authorities. The only real authority is the authority of God: this completely relativises all others.

Humanity is now called to develop an eschatological sense: an active comprehension of the end, which is not only destruction and

judgement but also the illumination and transfiguration of the world; not only catastrophe, but also a continuation of creation, the re-creation in Christ of the whole cosmological order (14). Now, then, is the moment of truth: the consummation of the historical process, when both humanity and the individual are called upon to meet Christ as the Messianic hope and liberator of fallen humanity. What is needed today is a reclaiming of this millennialist hope from its ideological captivity to the fundamentalist right (15) and its Marxist and fascist secularisation (16).

For it says in Corinthians 15.24 that Christ must reign until he has "destroyed" or "abolished" all rule, authority and power! This is in an eschatological context but it leads to a very anarchistic exegesis. God's ultimate purpose in Christ is to abolish or destroy all rule, authority and power and when this is finally done at the ultimate consummation of God's redemptive plan and purpose, Christ will submit himself to God, that God may be all in all!

We must also reject the various mysticisms that attempt to use spiritual techniques in order to reach God: however conceived or defined, to climb up to heaven on the ladder of our own mystical speculation is to bring God down to our own level, making God serve our own image and likeness. The Holy Spirit is not to be confused with the natural light of reason, intellect or conscience; neither should He be equated with occultist terms such as the 'divine spark', 'innate divinity', 'inner light', 'divine essence', etc. Human nature cannot regenerate or save itself

through a religion or any such spiritual techniques and rituals, or philosophies (17).

Conclusion: Chaos is a Dancing Star

Christian anarchy does not need to explain or justify itself: it is not another system. There is no sense in seeking neat answers, nor in desiring them; there would only be lying words to describe such a perception. Such an explanation and definition would deceive a person into thinking they possessed it; and so the end result of such systematic reasoning would merely be a subjective lie for theologians to toy with.

Christian anarchy is not a cause. It is true that one can use causes, however noble and true, to really escape or hide from something deep within oneself. We are to be aware in fighting the beast that we do not become like one in the process; for with every finger we point in identifying the enemy 'out there', there will always be two pointing back. There is no 'them and us', only me and you...and the state was and is only the enemy within, before it is the enemy without.

In the great science fiction film *Metropolis* (a film which perfectly illustrates the revolutionary dynamic of a Christian anarchy), Maria, the Christ figure, signals a curse on all those who internalise and affirm fixation to authoritarianism by stressing precisely rebellion against it. It rebukes those material anarchists who advocate authoritarian means of revolution: for the domination of the classless communist society

could be more totalitarian than the despotism it seeks to replace. Also, no-one can claim any moral high ground as pacifists or vegetarians (18): indeed, absolute pacifism is to be rejected for being anti-eschatological. Let us work and pray towards the idea of government being minimalist and decentralised, awaiting that final eschatological transformation into the Kingdom of God.

The message of forgiveness revealed in the cross of Jesus may appear to be politically incorrect; but love is not new, it is as old as creation itself. Forgiveness is and always will be the cross that breaks the cycle of violence, whether it be the state or the cop in our own hearts and minds.

The point being made is this: the battle was fought in '36 and the good guys lost. Capitalism has won and now sadly the only threat to the centralised state is coming from the libertarian right with its heterodox doctrine of anarcho-capitalism, its idol of the free market, free from statist intervention or regulation. Do we really want to live in a world like the film *Robocop*, of privatised police forces where trans-national companies co-opt all localist competition? Global capitalisation will lead to total economic monopoly, and hence greater political centralisation. The irony here is that such free market deregulation and big business oligarchy destroys genuine capitalism and gives us friendly fascism, or one world government: a liberal totalitarianism undermining national autonomy, seeking to impose a global corporatist consumer culture of Americanisation.

The natural government of kinship and community is replaced by the cosmopolitan ideology of mono-multiculturalism, the

folkstate - the political extension of communal national identity, is replaced by the undemocratic, unaccountable tyranny of speculative capital and international bankerdom, 'the money power'. What we arrive at is a kind of 'corporate feudalism'. The state exists only to provide the necessary environment to facilitate a 'level playing field' - for 'Capitalism', please read 'Cartelism'.

Capitalist neo-liberalism no longer really needs the state. The right-wing libertarians are correct, the state will wither away, not like Marx suggested as a law of Hegelian social evolution but as an inevitable development within capitalism itself. Capitalism therefore is 'anarchy'. Rampant individualism and fallen human autonomy demands that 'anarchic capital' create ever new markets for profit and consumption leading to the creation of a society without roots, history, a past or even a future, only the immediate gratification of 'now'. The anarchy of capitalism is moral relativism in the cultural, economic and social spheres leading ultimately to a 'chaos' that will then ultimately only be solved by the new world disorder of one-world governmental regulation by the World Bank, IMF and the UN etc. (interestingly, *laissez faire* in French means 'to let be').

Adam Smith - the father of liberal capitalism - was a 'deist' who believed God had created the world like a clock and then let it tick all alone by itself without God but at the mercy of a spurious naturalism based in the 'dualism' of the haves and have-nots. Such reactionary 'gnosticism' deserves to be challenged by the more Christian and 'personalist' vision of 'the social

trinity' (i.e. God is a 'communal' being) and the integralism of the Christian doctrine that, at the incarnation, God did not leave creation alone but entered into it.

Sadly, only the reactionary right in America, the citizens' militia groups, and individuals like the 'Unabomber' are bold enough to challenge the New World Order; but they do so within a popularist obsession with conspiracy theories, that can only produce a spiritual climate where they choose to live in a world as underdogs or victims. Friedrich Nietzsche (19) addressed such people in his book *The Antichrist*, criticising Christians and anarchists as having a common point of origin. He describes Jesus as a 'holy anarchist', who roused up the lowly, the outcast, the sinners within Judaism to oppose the ruling order; but the true revolutionary can only be inspired by acts of love, not resentment, witnessing instead to a revolution elsewhere, crucified between two thieves.

The whole world is an argument (20). Don't let the enemy define you!

The conclusion? There are no rights - all is gift...

From one who was an anarchist, but who now knows better: love God and do what you will. In God's service alone is true freedom found.

Afterword: The End of History or Adam's Playtime?

Saint Irenaeus once defined a heretic as someone who cannot accept contradiction or paradox; and this is where we are today called to be: a maverick by necessity. But where does one seek inspiration within the spiritual culture of today? Sadly, it is sometimes hard to find a spiritual home in the organised mainstream churches, who seem to have fallen into various contemporary errors, such as 'fundamentalism', 'liberalism', 'ecumenicalism' and 'charismaticism'. One may find oneself increasingly marginalized; nevertheless, this is no excuse for disillusionment, however tempted.

So what about the contemporary radical political scene? Faced with the cul-de-sacs of parliamentary politics or armed struggle, both easily recuperated by the powers that be, since both essentially rely on the system's own presuppositions (see Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*), some have found the path of non-violent direct action to be the only answer. But is this just another cul-de-sac, again on the system's own terms of engagement. Others speak not so much of direct action, which denotes a confrontational basis, but rather 'counter-power': communal living, credit unions, workers' cooperatives, etc. This, instead, is about living as independent of the system as we possibly can, forming small autonomous units within the shell of the old usury Babylon order (21), waiting for its inevitable downfall.

One of the most interesting currents among radical politics today is the coming together of the decentralist right and left, along the lines of the 'Proudhonist Synthesis' (see 'Proudhon and Anarchism' by L. Gambone, Red Lion Press 1966). The main criterion of this is decentralisation, regionalism and devolution, transcending left and right to form a third position purged of fascistic perversions of racism, authoritarianism and militarism. This is cultural folk nationalism, libertarian and anti-statist, based upon 'distributionist' economics: i.e. small is beautiful, inspired by the Christian economic theory of Hillaire Belloc, and G.K. Chesterton (22).

The British radical tradition needs reclaiming today. Names worth mentioning here include George Orwell, William Morris, John Hargreave, Rolf Gardiner, Jonathon Swift, and of course William Blake. But with this in mind, unless we can create a vision, the people will perish along the lines of Aldous Huxley's fictional *Brave New World*, in a technocratic monoculture. So where now can we look for vision, for renewal? Dada and then Surrealism spoke of 'Power to the Imagination'; the Beats, Hippies and Punks attempted to take the romanticist vision further. All good theology and politics should end in poetry, in celebration of life and the art of living. 'The glory of God is man fully alive', as Saint Irenaeus said.

Maybe the future belongs to the *trickster* or *holy fool*, with the arts of the court jester and the troubadour invoking the spirit of chivalry and courtly love, proclaiming an enlightened medievalism (without feudalism), a 21st Century radical

traditionalism merged with a revived Anglo-orthodoxy based in the 'via media' (neither Rome nor Geneva) and adhering to a true apostolic and Catholic (but non EU) principle of subsidiarity - orthodoxy being the faith of England before the great schism of 1054 and the 'Norman yoke' of 1066. Albion Arise! Albion Awake!

Raoul Vaneigem in his *Outline for an Alchemy of the Self* (taken from his *The Movement of the Free Spirit*, Zone Books, 1994) says:

The Philosopher's Stone is at the heart of the experience of Love, recalling humanity to the life from which it had been separated...There, finally, in outline, is the universe of the gift. It is not the sacrifice implied by the law of exchange, but love of the self emancipated from individualistic selfishness...self-love that is enriched by what it offers...it takes an absolute love of life...to reach the heart of love. To arrive at oneself one must begin with oneself. Each individual is his own fate...This, at least, is what I intend to bet all my chips on...The space and time allowed for life is very limited...Yet nothing can stop me searching out that strange crowd of people who inhabit the shadows of the scaffolds, the darkness of prisons and factories...It is they who have lived and are still trying to live...That crowd is a part of us, and lives within us. To hear their voices we need only listen below the vain cawing of death.

'And the earth shall be common to all, not parted out with walls or fences, shall then bring forth of her own accord much fruit and life, and wealth shall be common and undisturbed, for there shall be no poor man nor rich, no tyrant nor slave, none great nor small any longer, no kings, no princes, but all men shall be together in common and no more shall any man say night is come, nor the morrow, nor it was yesterday, for he maketh no more of days, nor of Spring, nor Winter, nor Summer, nor Autumn, neither marriage, nor death, nor selling, nor buying, nor set of sun, nor rising, for God shall make one long day.'

The Apocryphal Apocalypse of Peter

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Notes

1. The best scripture based case for Christian anarchism is Vernard Eller's *Christian Anarchy* (Eerdmans, 1987), which provides a balanced biblical exegesis of passages like *Romans 13:1-7* and other related scriptures. The book also provides a constructive critique of Christian leftism.
2. See *Blind Alley Beliefs* by David Cook (Intervarsity Press) and *The Dust of Death* by Os Guinness (Intervarsity Press).

3. See *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counterculture* by Michael C. Elliot (SCM Press, 1990).

4. The Eastern churches in general do not believe in 'original sin' in the Augustine sense (a term not found in scripture). The English church speaks rather of sharing in Adam's 'weakness' than his 'guilt', although this does not lessen the seriousness of sin, nor its inherited power. Also, the Eastern tradition to some extent has been critical of Western theories of the atonement where Christ is seen as the 'penal substitution' to 'satisfy' the retributive wrath and justice of God. This can lead to a dualistic Fall/Redemption scheme of salvation where the coming of Christ is seen as a rescue plan because things have gone wrong. The Incarnation would have happened anyway, independent and quite apart from a fall; and so death itself is not seen as a punishment inflicted on mankind for sin, but rather as part of a positive divine plan. See also *The Radical Evangelical* by Nigel Wright (SPCK).

5. The movement of the Free Spirit was 'antinomian' (one who believes Christians are free from all moral laws). This is clearly against scriptural teaching concerning progressive sanctification. See also *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* by Peter Marshall (Fontana Press, 1993), and *The Movement of the Free Spirit* by the situationist Raoul Vaneigem (Zone Books, 1994).

6. It is tragic that the contemporary Society of Friends has largely lost its Christian basis, and has become liberal, humanistic and Unitarian in its most basic leanings.

7. See *Camelot and the Vision of Albion* by grail mythologist and Arthurian historian Geoffrey Ashe, *William Blake, Visionary Anarchist* by Peter Marshall (Freedom Press), and E.P. Thompson's *Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (1993).

8. Also worth mentioning is Vladimir Solovyev's *A Short Story of Anti-Christ* in which he prophetically foresees the path of history in the light of the biblical tradition concerning the Jewish people and the unity of the Church.

9. See Jacques Ellul, *Anarchism and Christianity* (Katalbgele, 1980)

10. See Karl Barth, *Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans*.

11. The early believers had no bible in the sense recognisable today. Indeed, one could say the Bible is not the word of God: Jesus is the word of God - this avoids bibliolatry (making the bible into an idol). The source of the Scriptures is the Holy Spirit, and whereas the canon is closed, the inspiration of the Spirit continues.

12. We live now in the tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet' of the Kingdom.

13. *Eschatology* is the study of 'the last things', i.e. death, judgement, heaven and hell, and prophecy as related to the Second Coming of Christ and the Millennium.

14. Most historians maintain that the earlier Celtic Christian church, with its links to the ancient Coptic churches, was a fusion of certain druidic and bard traditions, with the wisdom tradition of Judaism, and its deep reverence and respect for creation and the feminine; and its decentralised self-governing forms of church organisation, which led to it becoming the first church to resist the external claims of papal Rome with its centralised authoritarianism. For a liberating view of cosmology see *The Cosmic Trilogy* and other works of C.S. Lewis and his mentor George MacDonald.

15. One thinks of the book *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey, which can be recommended only in a qualified way because it was exploited by the fundamentalist right in America during the Republican administration of the eighties. Lindsey's follow-up *Countdown to Armageddon* was even more ideologically captive to the political and evangelical right. Nevertheless, the basic testimony of *The Late Great Planet Earth* is worthy of consideration, even if we are to reject some of the reactionary political conclusions drawn from it. The popularist obsession with various conspiracy

theories is a modern day secularisation of apocalyptic themes that are covered in *The Late Great Planet Earth*, such as the trend towards world government, the revival of the Roman Empire in Europe, the coming of a false messiah and the emergence of a universalist religion uniting all faiths. Many of these themes can be traced back to the Adventist movement of the nineteenth century and the British Israel movement dating from the seventeenth century. Although both are considered with some suspicion as far as mainstream Christianity is concerned, both contain important and neglected biblical themes worthy of study, meditation and discernment. See also *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future* by Seraphim Rose, *The Myth of Papal Infallibility* by the St. John of Kronstadt Press and *The Dark Gods* by Anthony Roberts and Geoff Gilbertson.

16. See Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millennians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (Paladin, London 1984, and Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Penguin, 1978) and the various writings and works of A.L. Morton.

17. See Anthony Duncan, *The Christ, Psychotherapy and Magic: A Christian Appreciation of Occultism* (Element Books, to be re-issued) for a constructive and positive critique of such terms and their associations. See also *No Other Name: Can Only Christians Be Saved?* By John Saunders (C.S. Lewis Press) for an 'inclusive' view of salvation as related to faiths other than Christianity. The

Mysticism of Jacob Boehme draws much from the doctrine of the underground or abyss, a concept similar to the void or 'no thing' of eastern thought. Here we see an apparent similarity between atheism and the god of the mystics. Meister Eckhart once prayed "God, rid me of God," and Simone Weil wrote of a necessary purgative atheism in the individual's 'walk with God'. What is atheism but that which sings God's praises by calling him by another name? 'For the wrath of man shall praise God.' God is hidden and unrecognisably present in those who quarrel with God, who wrestle like Jacob with the angel, destroying all icons of God. They are never satisfied with the God of conventional religion, transcending both the submissiveness of the institution, and the false rebellion of atheism, being against God for God's sake. We can discern elements of mystical anarchism in other spiritual traditions - particularly in Zen, Sufi and the Tao (see *Sacred Drift - Essays on the Margins of Islam* by Peter Lamborn Wilson, and George Tarlenton's *Birth of a Christian Anarchist* published by Pendragon Press 1994. Also worthy of mention is *People of the Secret* by Ernst Scott (Octagon Press, 1986).

18. One thinks of all the other causes such as feminism, animal rights, black and gay rights. Berdyaev in his book *Slavery and Freedom* called anarchism a truth of apophatics, and tended towards a perception of anarchism as aristocracy universalised over and against ideological leftism. He also suggested that anarchism tended towards a monism, unless rescued by a true Trinitarian view of creation and humanity's place within it.

19. It is Friedrich Nietzsche who perhaps has merited the most compelling critique of orthodox Christianity from a philosophical point of view, although in his works one can still discern a personal revolt against the God of 'Lutheranism', which inevitably influences the whole course of his thought. As Ellul pointed out, if fascism and Marxism and even humanism are merely secular religions, then everything becomes merely a 'Christian' substitute for a rejected Christianity. Nietzsche, despite his brilliance and genius, still falls into this.

20. See *The Man Who Was Thursday* and *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* by G.K. Chesterton.

21. For more information regarding the teaching of Christ in an economic context, please see *Usury, Destroyer of Nations* by S.C. Mooney, Theopolis, 1988, and *Christian Duty Under Corrupt Government* by Ted R. Weiland, Mission to Israel Ministries, PO Box 248, Scotts Bluff, Nebraska 69363, USA.

22. For an analysis based upon this 'third way' position, see Richard Hunt's *To End Poverty: The Starvation of the Periphery by the Core*, Hakim Bey's excellent *Millennium* (Autonopedia and G.O.D. 1996) and *The Mercia Manifesto* by The Mercia Movement, Witan Press 1997).